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SUBJECT: DARFUR UPDATE: PROXY REBELS RETREAT TO LICK THEIR WOUNDS  
AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL MAY OFFENSIVES

¶1. (SBU) Summary: JEM forces have reportedly returned to Chad. There is no confirmation that Sudanese warplanes have attacked JEM positions in Chad. JEM appears to have been significantly weakened following its May offensive in Sudan. Chadian rebels have returned to Sudan. While they claim to be planning another attack, this is unlikely due to their rout by Chadian government forces last month. UNAMID's recently arrived Deputy Force Commander, RSA Maj. Gen. Duma Mdutyana, acknowledged UNAMID lacks important assets, and cannot function as an all-African force. No imminent humanitarian emergency threatens El Fasher's Zam Zam Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, but leaders there reported IDPs continue to trickle in from South Darfur. El Fasher authorities have implemented a security roundtable to prevent internecine GOS shootouts in the El Fasher marketplace. Meanwhile, hijackings and armed robberies continue. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Citing reports from their team sites and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), UNAMID confirmed on June 3 that the Government of Sudan (GOS) controls the towns of Umm Barro and Karnoi, and all fighters from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) have returned to Chad. Chadian media suggested that Sudanese warplanes bombed JEM positions, but UNAMID and Darfur rebel sources denied the reports, and no there is no confirmation of the rumors from North Darfur's border areas. Some IDPs have sought protection near the UNAMID Umm Barro team site. The Senegalese battalion there is providing limited humanitarian and medical assistance. UNAMID has recorded few civilian casualties as a result of the fighting in May between JEM, the GOS and Sudanese Liberation Army/Minni Minnawi (SLA/MM). The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) reported to UNAMID that JEM gave civilians prior warning to avoid the site of their planned attacks.

¶3. (SBU) In the wake of their unsuccessful May offensive, JEM has become a weaker force, according to UNAMID civil affairs officer and rebel faction expert Hideo Ikebe. Although JEM successfully recruited SLA/MM and SLA/Unity commanders from Dar Zaghawa earlier this year, they failed in efforts to enlist Zaghawa communities against what JEM termed GOS and SLA/MM "occupation" of the western North Darfur. With Khalil Ibrahim's JEM force having retreated to their base in Umm Jaras, SAF has fortified the towns of Karnoi and Umm Barro with Mi-24 Hind helicopter gunships and military assistance from SLA/MM. UNAMID has confirmed that in addition to incurring serious casualties in their May 24 attack on Umm Barro, JEM morale has ebbed significantly. JEM's chief field commander Hamid Shartai was killed and Bakhit Karima was gravely wounded during May offensives.

¶4. (SBU) Minni Minnawi confirmed that all JEM forces have returned to Chad and denied reports that the GOS has conducted aerial bombing raids into Chadian territory. Speaking with poloff on June 2 in El Fasher, Minnawi said that JEM has returned to Chad with little to show for its May offensive, having lost at least 50 vehicles, 60 fighters, and several main commanders as well. With the GOS gaining

ground in the border areas, Minnawi downplayed reports of a military alliance between his forces near the Chadian border and the SAF, telling the DCM and polchief on June 3 that his Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA)-signatory movement and the government forces have coordinated on intelligence, but the SAF is not providing military logistical or material support to SLA/MM forces. Minnawi said JEM had captured some 60 SLA/MM prisoners in May, and insisted they be released immediately and not as part of the stalled GOS-JEM prisoner exchange discussions in Doha. "Khalil Ibrahim is trying to engage us in the conflict, but we are not part of it," Minnawi said. "He needs to release our men immediately."

15. (SBU) Abakar Tollimi, Khartoum-based political chief of the Chadian rebel group, Union of Resistance Forces (UFR), told polchief on June 3 that UFR and aligned rebel groups have completely returned to positions inside Sudanese territory. Acknowledging the rebel group incurred heavy losses in fighting inside Chad on May 7-8, Tollimi said remaining UFR troops are "focused on training," and while they may stage another attack, they do not currently possess enough resources to fight anew. Besides additional aerial assets, Chadian forces, according to Tollimi had intel from the French on rebel movements and positions in the field. Tollimi noted the May UFR offensives (heading west) and JEM (heading east) were both overwhelmed by aerial firepower of the opposing government forces. UFR desires direct negotiations with the GOC, he said, and Tollimi requested a meeting with Special Envoy to Sudan Gen. Scott Gration.

16. (SBU) South African Major General Duma Mdutyana, new Deputy Force Commander (DFC) for UNAMID, told poloff on June 2 in El Fasher that he recognizes the challenges ahead for the UN/AU joint peacekeeping force in Darfur. DFC Mdutyana intends to spend this month traveling throughout the region to view the challenges and

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terrain firsthand, but already understands that the mission has taken on enormous responsibilities. "Time is running out for the people of Darfur," he said. "Our mission needs to grow in size and strength." DFC Mdutyana thanked the U.S. for its continued support to UNAMID, and added that the support of the international community was vital as the fledgling peacekeeping mission struggles to obtain essential logistics and aviation assets: "UNAMID cannot be an all-African effort. We must have the support and the contribution of the international community, including the United States."

17. (SBU) On a June 2 visit to Zam Zam IDP camp, Umdas (traditional leaders) thanked the U.S. for continued humanitarian attention to the beleaguered camp of 100,000 Zaghawa displaced from locations throughout North and South Darfur. Chief Umda Mohamed Osman acknowledged that while conditions in the camp are still "miserable," with only one functioning health clinic, no preschools and no veterinary services available, imminent disaster has been avoided for the time being thanks to the assistance of Relief International and UNICEF. Site of the April 4 visit of SE Scott Gration, Zam Zam continues to receive Zaghawa IDPs who trickle in from isolated locations in South Darfur, and Umda Osman added that IDPs are confident in that UNAMID's Formed Police Unit can protect the camp, monitoring for security incidents and resolving disputes in cooperation with security forces from SLA/MM.

18. (SBU) GOS authorities within El Fasher have taken a pro-active stance to prevent internecine conflict in the North Darfur capital, according to the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS). Following a marketplace shootout in May between the Border Intelligence Force (BIF) and GOS Central Reserve Police (CRP) that left over 20 people dead, National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) in El Fasher have begun convening regular security roundtable meetings with representatives from NISS, SAF, BIF, CRP and DPA-signatory rebel movements to address security violations within the city. In a June 2 visit to El Fasher's market, Poloff saw two unmanned belt-fed, truck-mounted machine guns with uniformed SAF soldiers nearby. El Fasher remains a high-crime area, with senior UNAMID military staff victims of a home invasion on the evening of May 30. Forcing their way into the compound, armed thieves held up two uniformed Western military officers and stole their UN vehicle, phones and laptop computers. After the officers informed the UN, who then passed the message on to local police,

blue-shirted Central Reserve Police (CRP) officers stopped the thieves' vehicle three hours later as it drove around El Fasher well past the UN-mandated 2100 curfew. The thieves fled the vehicle at the police checkpoint, and CRP shot the three assailants dead as they attempted to escape.

19. (SBU) Comment: This season's spate of proxy warfare on the Chad-Sudan border has been far less successful for the rebels (both Sudanese and Chadian) than last year's, as the under-armed Chadian rebels have limped back to West Darfur, and the poorly-commanded JEM has wasted more Chadian resources in its assaults on the GOS. Although the conflict remains unresolved and its root causes unaddressed, the May offensives have been limited to deserted reaches of Chadian and Sudanese territory and have spared civilians. In a briefing on May 24, UNAMID leadership voiced concerns that the proxy war in Darfur could develop into a direct Sudan-Chad war. This appears unlikely for now, and the upcoming rainy season should buy the peace process more breathing room. End comment.

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